United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Following mission to Burundi, Russian Ambassador says Security Council should follow developments closely to prevent another disaster in region; describes situation as tense and fraught with danger.

+ UNAMIR closely monitors population movements in Rwanda protected zone as deadline for departure of French troops looms; says figures so far indicate a problem, but not a crisis.

+ Mozambican Government formally disbands army one day after demobilization deadline; processing of troops to continue until 22 August.

+ General Assembly President calls for international action to curb ethnic conflicts; says ad hoc responses could undermine United Nations ability to maintain international peace and security.

+ Number of cease-fire violations in Sarajevo drops as tension eases across Bosnia and Herzegovina; Special Representative Akashi to meet with Bosnian Serbs in Pale tomorrow.

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The situation in Burundi is very tense and fraught with danger, and the Security Council should follow it closely with a view to preventing another disaster in the region, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vasiliy Sidorov, said today. However, he told correspondents at Headquarters that there were no ready-made solutions to the problem.

Ambassador Sidorov was one of the members of the Security Council mission which proceeded to Burundi last weekend after a visit to Mozambique. He reported to the Council on the mission's findings today. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali last week expressed great concern regarding political instability in Burundi, after more than 200 people had been killed in violence there.

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The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) has been anxiously monitoring population movements in the protected zone in the south-west of the country as French troops prepare to depart on 22 August. A United Nations spokesman said today and tomorrow would provide crucial indications regarding likely developments as the deadline approached.

There were population movements in both directions at the Zairean border, with a net flow of 2,000 persons a day, and larger movements inside the zone, according to the spokesman. He said the figures so far suggested a problem, but not yet a crisis. UNAMIR was distributing leaflets to counter propaganda alleging that people would be in danger when Operation Turquoise concluded.

Meanwhile, UNAMIR continued its build-up in the zone, with troops from the Ethiopian battalion being deployed almost immediately on arrival. The Mission's strength now stands at some 2,300 troops, and is expected to reach 3,000 by 22 August.

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The Mozambican Government army was formally disbanded at a ceremony in Maputo on Tuesday, according to the United Nations Observer Mission in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). As of that day, the Government had demobilized 49,000 troops, out of an overall strength of 64,000. Meanwhile, the Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO) had demobilized 16,000 troops, out of an overall strength of 23,000.

Monday was the deadline for demobilization under the General Peace Agreement, with one week of tolerance to complete the process, ONUMOZ noted. All assembly areas have now been closed, but it is anticipated that all troops who have opted for demobilization can be processed by 22 August, ONUMOZ reported.

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General Assembly President S. R. Insanally (Guyana) today called for international action to curb ethnic conflicts before they corrupted and consumed the global community. Mr. Insanally was addressing the opening of a seminar on Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies at Headquarters. While timely intervention could prevent violence from escalating, the United Nations was often so overwhelmed by the proliferation of ethnic strife that its response was ad hoc and inadequate. There was a clear and present danger that such an approach would jeopardize the Organization's credibility and compromize its ability to deal with threats to international peace and security.

Mr. Insanally said policies in multi-ethnic States must be designed to obviate the risk of conflict, and stressed the importance of education in preventing ethnic disputes. Communities should be taught the virtues of peaceful coexistence, he continued, stressing that the ethic of conflict must yield to the ethic of cooperation.

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The number of cease-fire violations in Sarajevo fell by a third today, but still stood at around 400 a day, according to a United Nations spokesman. There were no casualties from sniping incidents, despite sporadic gunfire downtown. Conflict levels were generally lower across Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Bihac pocket was relatively quiet. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) has been hosting talks between Bosnian Government forces and the breakaway Bosnian Muslim faction loyal to Fikret Abdic.

Special Representative Yasushi Akashi was scheduled to travel to Pale tomorrow for talks with Bosnian Serb leaders, the spokesman noted. Mr. Akashi met yesterday with Bosnian Government officials in Sarajevo and discussed a range of issues.

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